INDIAN HEAD HISTORY 1890 - 1997

1990 INDIAN HEAD CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

As the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Band performed musical selections, scores of Naval Ordnance Station employees filled the amphitheater, spilling out onto the grassy fields to witness a once-a-lifetime event—the station's 100th birthday celebration observed Sept. 25, 1990.

Flags waving in air, the Presidential Ceremonial Color Guard proudly marched in and posted colors, intensifying the significance of the day.

Fifty state flags topped the amphitheater stage, decorated with red, white, and blue bunting, reflecting the radiant glare of the morning sun. Sitting atop the stage were the station's distinguished guests: RADM George R. Meinig, USN, Deputy Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command, the Honorable Roy Dyson, 1st Congressional District of Maryland, the Honorable Paul Sarbanes, US Senator from Maryland, NOS Commanding Officer, CAPT Edwin P. Nicholson, USN and NOS Technical Director Roger Smith.

Leading the ceremony's speakers, Technical Director Smith emphasized the stations mission, explaining what it means to be "ready." "When there is trouble in the world, they come to us for help. They come to us for help because we are part of the mobilization base. It happened in WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, the Persian Gulf, and now Desert Shield, and its our job to be ready."

CAPT Nicholson highlighted the richness and significance of the station's history. "Throughout our long and proud history, the station has been able to adapt to the changes brought about by time and emerging technologies . . . As times changed, so did Indian Head. And I believe—and am confident, that we will continue to move forward into our second century of operations with the same vitality and purpose that we have had in the past," stressed the captain. "I am honored to be part of the Naval Ordnance Station's rich past and I am committed to pursuing its hopes for the future. Today, I urge all of you to join me as we rededicate ourselves to the goal of keeping this station a national treasure, poised to respond to America's needs of the future."

Building on the importance of a strong America, ADM Meinig praised Indian Head employees for their constant commitment to product quality, and ability to meet the world's challenges. "Indian Head has been at the forefront of technology since the first guns were tested 99 years ago," stated the admiral. " . . And today, every ocean of the world has a U.S. Navy presence in a peace-preserving role—they are able to do their jobs because of you right here. I believe Indian Head has a proud past and an even prouder future .. . I wish you God speed in meeting the challenge!" ADM Meinig concluded.

Halfway into the ceremony, a message was delivered to CAPT Nicholson, who approached the podium to share its contents.

"We've just received a message from President Bush, who sends congratulations on our Centennial celebration," the captain said as he prepared to recite the President's message. " . . . The station can indeed boast of a 'Century of Excellence' ... Working together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding, the U.S. Navy and the citizens of Charles County have not only ensured the successful operation of this defense facility, but also helped to make it a catalyst for regional development. I congratulate you on your mutually rewarding efforts," the President wrote.

The ceremony's final speaker, Senator Sarbanes, expressed "enormous respect and regard for this institution and what it stands for," highlighting the distinct qualities possessed by Indian Head employees.

You can't have a first-rate nation without having dedicated federal service, and this station is an example of what dedication can represent. Thank you to all of you who have maintained that level of excellence," the senator said.

As the ceremony concluded and distinguished guests were escorted from the podium, the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Band performed "Happy Birthday" to Indian Head employees. "We are the Navy's oldest continuously operating ordnance station," said CAPT Nicholson during his address, " . . and proud of it."

1965 INDIAN HEAD 75TH ANNIVERSARY REMARKS

Twenty-five years ago, CAPT Leslie R. Olsen, Commanding Officer of the Naval Propellant Plant, addressed employees and guests assembled for a gala reception to commemorate the Naval Propellant Plant's 75th diamond anniversary.

'I believe Ensign Dashiell, the officer who first came to Indian Head to survey the site for a proving ground, would be impressed by the station if he were able to be here today. For the past 75 years, this plant, as a proving ground, a powder factory and today as a propellant plant, has contributed significantly to the readiness of the Armed Forces defense of this great nation of ours," CAPT Olsen proudly stated on that festive Sept. 25, 1965 birthday.

1890 - 1899

It all began in September 1890 when the Bureau of Ordnance ordered young ENS Robert Brooke DASHIELL to Indian Head to take over construction and supervise the opening of the new Naval Proving Ground. His mission was to get the proving ground into operation as soon as possible in order to proceed with the testing of guns and armor, shells and mounts for the rapidly expanding fleet.

Young Dashiell had also set his sights on inventing a new mechanism for the breech loading of large naval guns, an invention later patented, commonly referred to as the Dashiell gun.

With a musty fishing shack serving as his headquarters, Ensign Dashiell set out to build his a model proving ground," hiring 40 men to begin construction on a swampy parcel of land where the Mattawoman Creek flowed into the Potomac.

These first Indian Head employees were Charles County farmers who gladly welcomed the opportunity for after-harvest work. On that first Monday morning, laborers could be seen arriving at the proving ground on horseback. Some rode 20 miles from their homes and would not return until the Saturday morning. Working at a feverish pace, they channeled the stream that divided the valley, built footbridges and constructed a wharf on the river front.

By the winter of 1890 the number of laborers grew to 100.

After the valley was drained, the proving ground began proof testing all guns turned out at the Navy Yard, and tested the powder purchased by the Navy Department. By early 1891 a steady flow of equipment and gun barrels arrived at the Indian Head Proving Ground. As the months passed more accomplishments unfolded under Ensign Dashiell's supervision, including the construction of valley firing positions, semi-underground shelters called gun-proofs, magazines and instrument houses.

Also to his credit was the construction of Quarters 2, 3 and 4 for his assistants, a house for the inspector and several small dwellings.

But the housing shortage for workers emerged as one of Indian Head's largest problems, as the Port Tobacco Times headlined, Several men employed at the Indian Head Proving Grounds were thought to have slept in a barn one evening...."

With the completion of additional living quarters, several families came to stay at the reservation, changing the surroundings of the proving ground. Mrs. James Swann's store at the Neck sent over pails of milk to the residences each morning and sausage and turkeys were delivered once a week by Mr. Jesse Rowe.

After that first year, gardens were planted on the old Irwin farm, meat was ordered from the big markets in Washington, and along the County Road, several frame buildings housed attractions such as Jack Quinn's Saloon and Patty O'Hearn's Bar.

In 1892, LT Newton E. MASON arrived to take over command from Ensign Dashiell.

The 32-year-old Dashiell, during his two year stay, had watched the swamp and brush of the valley transform into the model proving ground he had been ordered to build in the wilderness on the east shore of the Potomac.

The lieutenant continued the work on proving ground enhancements and kept up testing of ordnance and armor, but also focused on improving the working conditions.

Lieutenant Mason, like his predecessor, found the isolation difficult and immediately reported that, a Great trouble has been found in keeping good workmen down here on account of there being no place for them to live...." He recommended the construction of brick dwellings, improvements of the water supply, and the installation of an electric plant. By the end of his tenure in 1896, all of his ideas were in place or under construction. Three days after the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, which revealed a lack of an adequate supply of smokeless powder for the new rapid-fire guns, Congress passed a bill authorizing the Navy to proceed with the construction of a powder factory at Indian Head, devoted to smokeless powder production.

CDR Albert R. COUDEN, who succeeded Lieutenant Mason, pushed the construction schedule for the new factory.

Two years later, on June 16, 1900, LT Joseph STRAUSS, CDR Couden's successor, celebrated the opening of the factory marked by its first lot of Indian Head smokeless powder, lot #148.

The community of Indian Head continued to expand as the families of the powder factory work force set up households nearby. Enough children were being raised in the village to warrant the construction of a school house, and Miss Harriet Harris was soon hired as the institution's first teacher.

1900 - 1919

As the town of Indian Head and Powder Factory flourished, war in Europe brewed, facilitating full production of smokeless powder at the factory in case the United States entered the conflict. As more and more powder stockpiled at Indian Head, a marine unit arrived to protect the supplies, replacing the one strand of barbed wire that once marked the proving ground's boundary with a towering fence and gate.

In the spring of 1906 LCDR Joseph STRAUSS returned to Indian Head as Officer in Charge to work with chemist Dr. George PATTERSON in full-time war production.

The commander was admired for improvements made in employee working hours and the installation of a trolley system, and he continued his campaign to improve life at Indian Head.

As the proving ground began to test larger guns, a piece of acreage known as Mason's Enlargement was purchased as a matter of precaution - and with an eye toward World War I wartime expansion.

Stump Neck, as it came to be known, was a remote point with only a path connecting the area to the main road.

By 1913, the original mission of Indian Head evolved one step farther. Work gradually moved away from the simple proving of guns and armor to include standardization of shells and powder.

In 1915 an ammonium picrate plant was opened, as George Patterson worked to expand the chemical research program, both routine and experimental, which he had set up in his first decade at Indian Head.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the Naval Powder Factory was a major producer of smokeless powder for the Navy. Residents of Marbury and Pisgah could now arrive to work more quickly with the construction of a footbridge over the Mattawoman Creek, further linking the local community to Indian Head.

In his efforts to attract and hold the needed skilled labor force, CAPT Henry E. LACKEY, officer in charge from 1917 through 1920, strived to improve living conditions at Indian Head and addressed a range of troubling social problems including safety, housing, education, and communications concerns. CAPT Lackey commented in 1917, "First and foremost the station suffers from not having a village near large enough to accommodate the force necessary to carry on our work."

To help solve the housing problem, Captain Lackey orchestrated the construction of a new hotel, several barracks for civilians and a few new homes for both officers and civilians.

He also planned a post office, school house (later named Lackey School in 1920), and a set of dormitories. His hope was to "build up a real community spirit and make the Proving Ground one of the most attractive industrial communities under the Bureau of Ordnance."

During this period, mail was slow and supplies and greatly needed prospective employees were continually held up due to the lack of dependable transportation linking Indian Head to surrounding cities.

Fred and Marshall Bailey were awarded the contract to construct 14 and one-half miles of railroad from the Powder Factory to the established

Pennsylvania Railroad junction in White Plains, Md., moving their 30-man crew to Indian Head to begin construction.

The railroad opened six months later on Armistice Day, May 29,1919. Despite the opening of the railroad link to White Plains in 1919, the facility remained largely isolated and faced growing concerns in the coming decade. Low budgets, a restricted demand for powder, the move of the proving ground to Dahlgren, Va., and naval disarmament all plagued Indian Head during the "Roaring 20s."

But the community of Indian Head survived despite the challenges nipping at its heels. What surfaced was a tightly knit society with a long-term civilian workforce at its core.

1920 - 1939

After 1921 Indian Head was no longer designated as the "Naval Proving Ground" but was referred to as the "Naval Powder Factory."

The facility had shifted from a naval gun proving ground to a chemical factory, research laboratory and Explosive D factory, employing a talented civilian work force.

Among its ranks were chemists Dr. George W. PATTERSON, director of production and research from 1890 through 1940; and Dr. Walter FARNUM, director of production from 1940 through 1953.

With 10,000 people working at the Powder Factory each day, the facility was teeming with employees inside and outside its gates.

Residents did take time off from work, though, especially with the opening of the Annual September Fair in the early 1920s, organized by Officer in Charge CAPT J. W. GREENSLADE and supporters H. Marvin Coster and Henry Burroughs.

Held outside the gates near the housing area, the annual three-day fair attracted 10,000 visitors by 1927 and was considered a much looked-forward-to affair. Exhibitors for the Annual Fair and Carnival were solicited from many parts of Charles County. Among the many attractions were food and appliance shows boasting displays from both nearby Washington and far-away Baltimore. The new recreation building was brimming with the latest in ice boxes and cooks stoves, and the Maryland Department of Health conducted physical exams free if charge, becoming one of the most popular attractions each year. For Charles County children, though, the checkups were surpassed by the fair's carnival rides. It was a once-a-year treat for the county's children to swing from a gigantic Ferris wheel or whirl on a merry-go-round.

But the sound of laughing children high atop carnival rides was silenced when the naval facility and the town of Indian Head grew solemn with news of the Great Depression which crept into the lives of Charles County residents.

In the late 1920s men on the powder line wondered how long it would be before they, too, would be laid off.

President Herbert Hoover was quoted in local papers as, ". . . trying to get the country's finances under control," yet still the newspapers talked of public welfare and unemployment. Powder factory workers experienced two consecutive reductions in salary, then word came down from the Bureau of Ordnance to "cut down the force."

As employees packed up their families, the factory work force dwindled to less than 500. Bare windows took the place of cheery curtains and silence fell upon the small town as weeds sprung up around deserted homes and playgrounds.

It was assistance from President Roosevelt, who visited Indian Head during his time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, that kept Indian Head going during the lean years. In 1933 the Navy Department allotted the Powder Factory $71,000 for the production of smokeless powder.

Meanwhile, the 325th Company of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program, opened a work camp in Indian Head, creating additional jobs. The Corps worked to improve the roads, plant new trees and beautify the station. In 1938 and 1939 powder production was up to three million pounds per year, with increases planned in the event of war. During this time, a new Explosive D Plant and Extrusion Plant were built as Indian Head prepared for war.

1940 - 1959

After war had broken out in Europe but before the United States entered the war, 62 uniformed personnel and 794 civilians were employed at the Naval Powder Factory.

Doctor Patterson, now past retirement age and reappointed by a special legislative exemption, directed the Production Department as "Head Chemist," and Doctor Farnum, as "Senior Chemist," ran the chemical laboratory. The Explosive D Plant was directed by chemical engineers T. C. Jenkins, R. H. Dement, and H. M. Coster.

As Adolf Hitler's German Army swept through Europe claiming more territory for the Third Reich, U.S. forces stood poised on alert-and Indian Head encountered its second period of rapid, war induced expansion.

The World War II years brought rapid growth to the Indian Head Naval Powder Factory, which was considered one of the leading war-supply stations.

Some of this growth generated other laboratories and facilities, which relocated elsewhere, while a few of the new processes provided new capacities in facilities and personnel which would help shape the postwar identity of Indian Head.

Almost overnight, the Navy set up at Indian Head a facility referred to as the Explosives Investigation Laboratory where extensive examinations of captured enemy ordnance took place.

Another expansion centered in the area of production.

In cooperation with researchers at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, Calif., Indian Head put into operation an extrusion plant for pressing ballistite powder into rocket "grains," while continuing to produce smokeless powder and Explosive D.

The expansion into production of extruded grains would reshape the destiny and mission of the facility.

Based on suggestions and studies made by Ensign T. F. Dixon and civilian chemist J. B. Nichols, the extrusion plant was redesigned in 1943, incorporating the "Lauritzen" method of extrusion and finishing of double-base, JPN (Jet Propulsion/Navy) powder grains.

Also during this period of World War II expansion, victory gardens sprung up in the Dry House area as a form of lunchtime recreation for Indian Head's war-effort employees, who lived in temporary housing funded by Congressional appropriations.

More military members arrived to work in the plant and help with administration issues, punctuated by the arrival of the first Navy Waves in 1944.

Since no recreation opportunities existed in the town, the military pooled efforts with the civilian work force to build a golf course and swimming pool facilities.

Federal housing projects at Potomac Heights, for whites, and at Perry Wright (later Woodland Village), for blacks, provided 550 off-base homes in the area. An additional 350 housing units were built on the station grounds, and schools were enlarged. 'The government put up a lot of temporary housing - just a mass production - where they could house all of these people that were brought in," Indian Head resident Gilbert Milstead remembered in an interview for Andrea Hammer's book, "Praising the Bridge that Brought Me Over." "The majority of it was Potomac Heights, which is a home owner's organization now. And then down below the hill at Indian Head, at Woodland Village, was another area for temporary homes."

The chemical laboratory, founded by Doctor Patterson, continued to play a major role for the Bureau of Ordnance in providing chemical expertise in the field of explosives and propellants. After his retirement in 1940, Patterson's labs continued to enlarge. The development of laboratories, staff and equipment to test the new products positioned Indian Head at the end of World War II as a recognized research capacity.

By 1945, the station celebrated with the dedication of its $1 million research and development laboratory, headed up by its first director, Dr. Francis C. THAMES, who began his career at Indian Head in 1929 as an analytical chemist.

Indian Head numbered 5,217 civilians and military personnel, now not only making smokeless powder, but testing rocket fuel and experimenting with mines and other ordnance.

During the period 1946 through 1949, the station's commanding officers worked with civilian researchers and with the Bureau of Ordnance in attempting to get the official mission of the Indian Head Powder Factory modified to reflect its new strengths.

Although the Powder Factory had taken on a research and development emphasis, the larger scale employment at Indian Head depended upon the production facilities. With the decline in smokeless powder consumption and with the layoff of employees in the postwar months, congressmen and senators from Maryland soon came to the defense of the facility.

Shortly after these political pressures, the Bureau agreed to the establishment of a set of pilot plants at Indian Head which would have the capacity to produce experimental new propellants for naval research use. By the summer of 1947, the Bureau of Ordnance agreed to a plan to construct four pilot plants at Indian Head to include a nitroglycerin pilot plant; a plant to produce varied nitrogen-content nitrocellulose; a plant for mixing and rolling experimental lots of solvent and solventless propellant; and a fourth plant for experimental production of cast propulsion units. Over the next six years, Indian Head gradually built up its "pilot plant" capacity, building on strength in experimental propellants. Coming at a time of crisis, the pilot plants began to reshape the mission of Indian Head as its redefinition slowly emerged.

CAPT Clarence VOEGELI, Naval Powder Factory Commanding Officer from 1948 through 1952, carried on work in pilot plant construction initiated by his predecessor, CAPT Byron HANLON, Commanding Officer from 1946 through 1948.

Captain Voegeli pushed in 1948 for the completion of the nitroglycerin plant as his first priority, followed by construction of a nitrocellulose plant, mixing and rolling plant, and a casting plant.

Growing alongside the naval facility, the town of Indian Head by 1947 enjoyed 136 homes, five churches, two halls, one community center and 22 public buildings, including a score of flourishing businesses such as Carpenter & McWilliams Garage, Yank's Market, Ely's Department Store, Club Maryland and Speake's Barber Shop, to name but a few.

In 1950, the Korean conflict provided the impetus for the factory's stepped up explosive and propellant production.

Employment grew from 1,590 in 1950 to 3,044 employees in 1953.

And by 1954, the Biazzi nitroglycerin plant (patterned after a Swiss design), a nitro-guanidine and cordite N plants were in full operation.

With Indian Head carrying the name Powder Factory, CAPT Francis SCANLAND, Commanding Officer in 1952, argued that the term "powder factory" itself, "implied a plant primarily engaged in the manufacture of gun powder." While the facility's name had been correct in the 1940s, he stressed, "it is no longer correct and becoming more and more incorrect." He recommended that the name be changed to the Naval Propellant Development Station, pushed for a research and development and pilot plant focus, and continued housing of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal School, established at Stump Neck in 1946.

Following the congressional hearings in 1958, held to consider the Naval Powder Factory's future when production of smokeless powder had ended, Indian Head's mission became clearer.

Building on work done at the facility's Patterson Pilot Plant during the 1940s, the factory would now produce missile fuel for the long-range Polaris missile and smaller rockets, and later, propellants for emergency ejection mechanisms. With participation in the Polaris program taking place at Indian Head, 23 new buildings began construction in 1959 to support the work load. Reflecting its new mission and direction, the Naval Powder Factory shed its former name and officially became the Naval Propellant Plant on Aug.14, 1958, under Commanding Officer CAPT Griswold T. ATKINS.

By this time in Indian Head history, many employees were full of stories about their fathers and even grandfathers who contributed to Indian Head's destiny over the decades. For many production workers, employment at Indian Head had truly become a family matter.

Dorothy Artes, a long-time resident of Indian Head, recalled in an interview for the book, " Praising the Bridge that Brought Me Over," the family tradition of working at Indian Head. "I was born here, down below the hill in a very old residential area called Gering's Road. My father was a quarterman of the machine shop at the Naval Powder Factory. My father was employed there, my husband retired from there, and my son is there yet. I'm just a permanent fixture. And gladly."

1960 - 1979

Over the years 1962 through 1974, Joe BROWNING, who became technical director of the Naval Propellant Plant in 1962, worked to expand the mission of Indian Head bringing a period of creative and productive change to Indian Head.

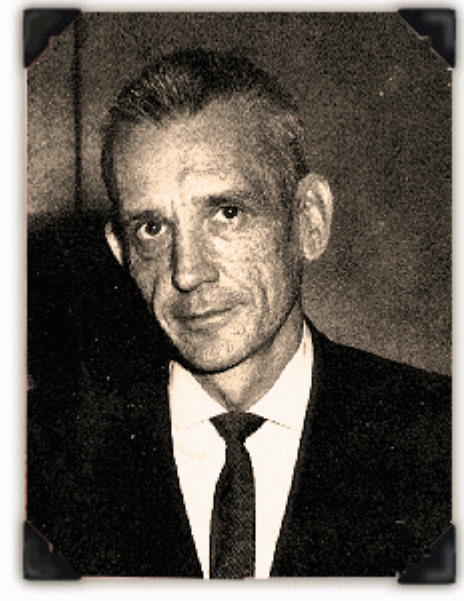
Assisting Browning in managing the plant during this "transition" period were Art Mayer, Walt Rees, Brooks Ballance, and Jim Wilson. Mayer was head of production operations and later became head of a Fleet Support Engineering Department; Rees became head of all production operations, while Ballance was named head of pre-production operations. Wilson later became head of the R&D Department.

In the mid-1960s Al Camp was brought in to enhance the plant's propellant technology expertise, and Bill Brimijoin continued for many years as the facility's world-recognized expert in the manufacture of nitroglycerin.

Highlighting the year 1962 was the pilot-scale manufacture of the X-248 third stage motor for the Scout missile, followed by Indian Head's development of Otto Fuel II for high-speed torpedoes in 1963, retooling the Biazzi Plant for its production.

Additional growth came from the increase in the need for weapons during the Vietnam conflict, specifically from 1965 through 1969.

Reflecting the diversification from propellants into related fields of chemistry, engineering, and production contract management, the Naval Propellant Plant again changed its name, becoming the Naval Ordnance Station in 1966.



The mid to late-1960s were characterized by the production of such products as the plastic explosive C-3 in 1965, an updated Zuni rocket in 1966, Polaris (A2 and A3) casting powder from 1961 through 1967, Poseidon casting powder (C-3) in 1967, and composite propellant and PBX explosive processing.

In mid-1972 Technical Director Browning created a new department of special programs, comprised of Electronics, Cartridge Actuated Devices, Gun Systems, and Documentation Divisions. Over the next years, the department would become a resource for many of the new directions taken at Indian Head.

David LEE succeeded Joe Browning as technical director in 1975, serving through November 1985.

The new technical director reorganized station management, orienting the new offices toward particular customers and product lines. Where Browning had acted as the "chief marketer," soliciting business for the station, Lee began to divide up that responsibility and delegate it to specialists in each area. Under a single program management officer, separate individuals would now focus on groups of programs.

Through 1976 and 1977, Lee's reorganization efforts began to bear fruit.

And by 1978, Technical Director Lee pointed to successes in the Cartridge Actuated Devices/Propellant Actuated Devices (CAD/PAD) areas, electronics area, quality engineering work and in engineering in general. "For the first time in 26 years," he said, "Indian Head has been removed from the base closure list." This was testimony to his personal success and that of the commanding officers and employees at NOS.

Through the late 1970s, the tempo of production increased and volume of business expanded.

1980 - 1997

With the national mood turning in a more pro-business direction, the Navy-owned facilities at Indian Head in the early 1980s had found several niches in the propellant market. In addition to providing engineering services to translate a laboratory process into a production process for the private sector, and providing a national "back up" resource in the case of emergency, full-scale production at Indian Head would concentrate on several processes/products too unprofitable, too dangerous, or too difficult for the private sector to manufacture.

When Lee resigned in 1985, Dominic MONETTA was selected as technical director, serving from November 1986 through June 1989.

Technical Director Monetta reorganized the program management concept instituted by Lee, increasing the number of program managers from seven to 19; and created a rank of "associate technical director," which comprised three staff positions reporting directly to the technical director. The individuals he selected as associate technical director were A. J. Perk, Jay Thornburg and Vince Hungerford, known on station as "the three wise men." With the focus on new management ideas during the late 1980s, the station still concentrated, however, on technology and engineering projects.

Continuing a trend which began during the 1970s, NOS increased the proportion of engineering and administrative roles over production. Recognizing the achievement of the station, NAVSEA reconstituted several of the previously acquired agency roles as official "centers of excellence" for the Navy. This meant that the Navy would not duplicate the effort elsewhere and would treat the facility as the primary collection of experts in a particular area. NOS acquired the "center of excellence" designation by mid-1989 for six technologies, which had grown out of an established track record. These were: guns, rockets and missiles; energetic chemicals; ordnance devices (CAD/PAD); missile weapon simulators; explosive process development engineering; and explosive safety, occupational safety and health, and environmental protection.

By 1989, the Naval Ordnance Station served as a resource for the Navy and provided innovative work on the systems of the next decade. Special teams were assembled to work on critical issues such as the investigation into the gun turret explosion aboard the USS IOWA on April 25, 1989, and projects for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and other agencies.

The world watched the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988 and 1989, democratic reforms in Eastern Europe, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and heard terms such as "glasnost" and "perestroika," all suggesting that relations with the Soviet Union would improve.

Facing new budgetary cuts, just as it had experienced in the 1920s and 1940s, Indian Head once again looks toward becoming a "lean and mean" facility.

When CAPT George F. WENDT, Commanding Officer from 1987 through 1989, completed his tour at Indian Head, NOS saw a complete change in leadership with both a new commanding officer and new technical director coming aboard within a few months of each other in June and October 1989.

CAPT Edwin P. NICHOLSON, Indian Head's new commanding officer, immediately set to work on trimming down costs along with recognizing the station's successes. Taking over from Monetta in October 1989, Technical Director Roger SMITH, with 25 years in program management at NAVSEA, expressed motivation in using his knowledge to further enhance Indian Head's reputation with its customers. At the station's helm, Captain Nicholson and Roger Smith have inherited a major development center-one with a century of evolution behind it, as the next 100 years lie before them.

"I still say thank God for the plant," said Indian Head resident Golden Evans. "Even though I came here from somewhere else, I came here and became a part of the plant.... That's why I say I'm not burning the bridge that brought me over; I'm praising the bridge that brought me over . . . I wouldn't be in this house today . . . if it hadn't been for Indian Head."

Now that the defense budget is decreasing, with the weapons budget decreasing to a much greater extent, Indian Head Division's importance to the DoD is greater than ever. Private companies in energetics are getting out of the business, and more are expected to follow as the volume of work goes down.

There is no commercial market for their products, their large expensive facilities are idled and the cost of environmental compliance is skyrocketing (DuPont being one example). The Navy has been planning for this and has taken actions to consolidate energetics work at Indian Head. The Navy's explosives research and undersea warhead development work (about 300 workers) has been transferred from NSWC White Oak Maryland to Indian Head by BRAC 93 and the explosive loading facilities at Naval Weapons Station Yorktown have begun to be shut down with the work transferred to Indian Head.

The Department of the Navy has established imperatives for the future, one of which is to ensure redundant plants for explosives or similar hazardous materials. The advantage of this was most recently seen during Desert Storm when we produced rockets and mine clearing explosives three shifts a day. Another facet of our mission is to develop production processes for explosives and propellants and to transfer these processes to the private sector.

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